

Wellness Notes

Developing Social Support:

(How to Cultivate a Network of Friends to Help You through Rough Times)*

Part II

Family ties, friendships and involvement in social activities can offer a psychological buffer against stress, anxiety and depression. Social support can also help you cope better with health problems.

If you want to expand your social support network, here are some things you can do:

- **Get out with your pet.** Seek out a dog park or make conversation with those who stop to talk.
- **Work out.** Join a class through a local gym, senior center or community fitness facility. Or start a lunchtime walking group at work.
- **Do lunch.** Invite an acquaintance to join you for breakfast, lunch or dinner.
- **Volunteer.** Hospitals, places of worship, museums, community centers and other organizations often need volunteers. You can form strong connections when you work with people who share a mutual interest.
- **Join a cause.** Get together with a group of people working toward a goal you believe in, such as an election or the cleanup of a natural area.
- **Join a hobby group.** Find a nearby group with similar interests in such things as auto racing, music, gardening, books or crafts.
- **Go back to school.** Take a college or community education course to meet people with similar interests.

Having a variety of interests can create new opportunities to meet people. And it may also help make you more interesting to others.

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